

SWITCHINGS OF SEMIFIELD MULTIPLICATIONS

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ABSTRACT. Let $B(X, Y)$ be a polynomial over \mathbb{F}_{q^n} which defines an \mathbb{F}_q -bilinear form on the vector space \mathbb{F}_{q^n} , and let ξ be a nonzero element in \mathbb{F}_{q^n} . In this paper, we consider for which $B(X, Y)$, the binary operation $xy + B(x, y)\xi$ defines a (pre)semifield multiplication on \mathbb{F}_{q^n} . We prove that this question is equivalent to finding q -linearized polynomials $L(X) \in \mathbb{F}_{q^n}[X]$ such that $\text{Tr}_{q^n/q}(L(x)/x) \neq 0$ for all $x \in \mathbb{F}_{q^n}^*$. For $n \leq 4$, we present several families of $L(X)$ and we investigate the derived (pre)semifields. When q equals a prime p , we show that if $n > \frac{1}{2}(p-1)(p^2-p+4)$, $L(X)$ must be a_0X for some $a_0 \in \mathbb{F}_{p^n}$ satisfying $\text{Tr}_{q^n/q}(a_0) \neq 0$. Finally, we include a natural connection with certain cyclic codes over finite fields, and we apply the Hasse-Weil-Serre bound for algebraic curves to prove several necessary conditions for such kind of $L(X)$.

1. INTRODUCTION

A *semifield* \mathbb{S} is an algebraic structure satisfying all the axioms of a skewfield except (possibly) the associativity. In other words, it satisfies the following axioms:

- (S1) $(\mathbb{S}, +)$ is a group, with identity element 0;
- (S2) $(\mathbb{S} \setminus \{0\}, *)$ is a quasigroup;
- (S3) $0 * a = a * 0 = 0$ for all a ;
- (S4) The left and right distributive laws hold, namely for any $a, b, c \in \mathbb{S}$,

$$(a + b) * c = a * c + b * c,$$

$$a * (b + c) = a * b + a * c;$$

- (S5) There is an element $e \in \mathbb{S}$ such that $e * x = x * e = x$ for all $x \in \mathbb{S}$.

A finite field is a trivial example of a semifield. Furthermore, if \mathbb{S} does not necessarily have a multiplicative identity, then it is called a *presemifield*. For a presemifield \mathbb{S} , $(\mathbb{S}, +)$ is necessarily abelian [17]. A semifield is not necessarily commutative

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or associative. However, by Wedderburn's Theorem [27], in the finite case, associativity implies commutativity. Therefore, a non-associative finite commutative semifield is the closest algebraic structure to a finite field. We refer to [18] for a recent and comprehensive survey.

The first family of non-trivial semifields was constructed by Dickson [7] more than a century ago. In [17], Knuth showed that the additive group of a finite semifield \mathbb{S} is an elementary abelian group, and the additive order of the nonzero elements in \mathbb{S} is called the *characteristic* of \mathbb{S} . Hence, any finite semifield can be represented by $(\mathbb{F}_q, +, *)$, where q is a power of a prime p . Here $(\mathbb{F}_q, +)$ is the additive group of the finite field \mathbb{F}_q and $x * y$ can be written as $x * y = \sum_{i,j} a_{ij} x^{p^i} y^{p^j}$, which forms a mapping from $\mathbb{F}_q \times \mathbb{F}_q$ to \mathbb{F}_q .

Geometrically speaking, there is a well-known correspondence, via coordinatisation, between (pre)semifields and projective planes of Lenz-Barlotti type V.1, see [5, 13]. In [1], Albert showed that two (pre)semifields coordinatise isomorphic planes if and only if they are isotopic.

Definition 1.1. Let $\mathbb{S}_1 = (\mathbb{F}_p^n, +, *)$ and $\mathbb{S}_2 = (\mathbb{F}_p^n, +, \star)$ be two presemifields. If there exist three bijective linear mappings $L, M, N : \mathbb{F}_p^n \rightarrow \mathbb{F}_p^n$ such that

$$M(x) \star N(y) = L(x * y)$$

for any $x, y \in \mathbb{F}_p^n$, then \mathbb{S}_1 and \mathbb{S}_2 are called isotopic, and the triple (M, N, L) is called an isotopism between \mathbb{S}_1 and \mathbb{S}_2 .

Let $\mathbb{P} = (\mathbb{F}_{p^n}, +, *)$ be a presemifield. We can obtain a semifield from it via isotopisms in several ways, such as the well known Kaplansky's trick (see [18, page 2]). The following method was recently given by Bierbrauer [2]. Define a new multiplication \star by the rule

$$(1.1) \quad x \star y := B^{-1}(B_1(x) * y),$$

where $B(x) := 1 * x$ and $B_1(x) * 1 = 1 * x$. We have $x \star 1 = B^{-1}(B_1(x) * 1) = B^{-1}(1 * x) = x$ and $1 \star x = B^{-1}(B_1(1) * x) = B^{-1}(1 * x) = x$, thus $(\mathbb{F}_{p^n}, +, \star)$ is a semifield with identity 1. In particular, when \mathbb{P} is commutative, B_1 is the identity mapping.

Let $\mathbb{S} = (\mathbb{F}_{p^n}, +, *)$ be a semifield. The subsets

$$N_l(\mathbb{S}) = \{a \in \mathbb{S} : (a * x) * y = a * (x * y) \text{ for all } x, y \in \mathbb{S}\},$$

$$N_m(\mathbb{S}) = \{a \in \mathbb{S} : (x * a) * y = x * (a * y) \text{ for all } x, y \in \mathbb{S}\},$$

$$N_r(\mathbb{S}) = \{a \in \mathbb{S} : (x * y) * a = x * (y * a) \text{ for all } x, y \in \mathbb{S}\},$$

are called the *left*, *middle* and *right nucleus* of \mathbb{S} , respectively. It is easy to check that these sets are finite fields. The subset $N(\mathbb{S}) = N_l(\mathbb{S}) \cap N_m(\mathbb{S}) \cap N_r(\mathbb{S})$ is called the *nucleus* of \mathbb{S} . It is easy to see, if \mathbb{S} is commutative, then $N_l(\mathbb{S}) = N_r(\mathbb{S})$ and $N_l(\mathbb{S}) \subseteq N_m(\mathbb{S})$, therefore $N_l(\mathbb{S}) = N_r(\mathbb{S}) = N(\mathbb{S})$. In [13], a geometric interpretation of these nuclei is discussed. The subset $\{a \in \mathbb{S} : a * x = x * a \text{ for all } x \in \mathbb{S}\}$ is called the *commutative center* of \mathbb{S} and its intersection with $N(\mathbb{S})$ is called the *center* of \mathbb{S} .

Let G be a group and N a subgroup. A subset D of G is called a *relative difference set* with parameters $(|G|/|N|, |N|, |D|, \lambda)$, if the list of differences of D covers every element in $G \setminus N$ exactly λ times, and no element in $N \setminus \{0\}$. We call N the *forbidden subgroup*.

Jungnickel [15] showed that every semifield \mathbb{S} of order q leads to a $(q, q, q, 1)$ -relative difference set D in a group G which is not necessarily abelian. Assume that \mathbb{S} is commutative. If $q = p^n$ and p is odd, then G is isomorphic to the elementary abelian group C_p^{2n} ; if $q = 2^n$, then $G \cong C_4^n$. (C_m is the cyclic group of order m .)

Let p be an odd prime. A function $f : \mathbb{F}_{p^n} \rightarrow \mathbb{F}_{p^n}$ is called *planar*, if the mapping

$$x \mapsto f(x+a) - f(x)$$

is a permutation of \mathbb{F}_{p^n} for every $a \in \mathbb{F}_{p^n}^*$. Planar functions were first defined by Dembowski and Ostrom in [6]. It is not difficult to verify that planar functions over \mathbb{F}_{p^n} are equivalent to $(p^n, p^n, p^n, 1)$ -relative difference sets in C_p^{2n} . Planar functions over \mathbb{F}_{2^n} , introduced recently in [25, 29], has a slightly different definition: A function $f : \mathbb{F}_{2^n} \rightarrow \mathbb{F}_{2^n}$ is called *planar*, if the mapping

$$x \mapsto f(x+a) + f(x) + ax$$

is a permutation of \mathbb{F}_{2^n} for every $a \in \mathbb{F}_{2^n}^*$. They are equivalent to $(2^n, 2^n, 2^n, 1)$ -relative difference sets in C_4^n ; see [29, Theorem 2.1].

Let f be a planar function over \mathbb{F}_{q^n} , where q is a power of prime. A *switching* of f is a planar function of the form $f + g\xi$ where g is a mapping from \mathbb{F}_{q^n} to \mathbb{F}_q and $\xi \in \mathbb{F}_{q^n}^*$. Switchings of planar functions over \mathbb{F}_{p^n} , where p is an odd prime, were investigated by Pott and the third author in [24]. In [29], it is proved that switchings of the planar function $f(x) = 0$ defined over \mathbb{F}_{2^n} can be written as affine polynomials $\sum a_i x^{2^i} + b$, which are equivalent to $f(x)$ itself.

In the present paper, we will investigate the switchings of (pre)semifield multiplications. To be precise, we will consider when the binary operation

$$x * y = x \star y + B(x, y)\xi$$

on \mathbb{F}_{q^n} defines a (pre)semifield multiplication, where \star is a given (pre)semifield multiplication, $\xi \in \mathbb{F}_{q^n}^*$ and $B(x, y)$ is an \mathbb{F}_q -bilinear form from $\mathbb{F}_{q^n} \times \mathbb{F}_{q^n}$ to \mathbb{F}_q . (One may identify \mathbb{F}_{q^n} with \mathbb{F}_q^n , although it is not necessary.) We call $x * y$ a *switching neighbour* of $x \star y$. In particular, we will concentrate on the case in which \star is the multiplication of a finite field.

In Section 2, we show that finding B such that $x * y := xy + B(x, y)\xi$ defines a (pre)semifield multiplication is equivalent to finding q -linearized polynomials $L(X) \in \mathbb{F}_{q^n}[X]$ such that $\text{Tr}_{q^n/q}(L(x)/x) \neq 0$ for all $x \in \mathbb{F}_{q^n}^*$. For $n \leq 4$, we give in Section 3 several q -linearized polynomials $L(X) \in \mathbb{F}_{q^n}[X]$ satisfying this condition and we discuss the presemifields of the corresponding switchings. In Section 4, we prove that when $q = p$ is a prime and $n > (p-1)(p^2 - p + 4)/2$, the only $L(X)$ satisfying the above condition are those of the form βX where $\text{Tr}_{p^n/p}(\beta) \neq 0$. In Section 5, we explore a connection of the q -linearized polynomials $L(X)$ satisfying the above condition with certain cyclic codes over \mathbb{F}_q . Finally, in Section 6 we derive several necessary conditions for the existence of the q -linearized polynomials $L(X)$ from the Hasse-Weil-Serre bound for algebraic curves over finite fields.

2. PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION

Let $\text{Tr}_{q^n/q}$ be the trace function from \mathbb{F}_{q^n} to \mathbb{F}_q . We define

$$B(x, y) := \text{Tr}_{q^n/q}\left(\sum_{i=0}^{n-1} b_i x y^{q^i}\right), \quad x, y \in \mathbb{F}_{q^n},$$

where $b_i \in \mathbb{F}_{q^n}$. It is easy to see that $B(x, y)$ defines an \mathbb{F}_q -bilinear form from $\mathbb{F}_{q^n} \times \mathbb{F}_{q^n}$ to \mathbb{F}_q , and every such bilinear form can be written in this way.

In the next theorem, we consider the switchings of a finite field multiplication.

Theorem 2.1. *Let $x * y := xy + B(x, y)\xi$, where $B(x, y) := \text{Tr}_{q^n/q}(\sum_{i=0}^{n-1} b_i xy^{q^i})$, $b_i \in \mathbb{F}_{q^n}$, and $\xi \in \mathbb{F}_{q^n}^*$. Then $*$ defines a presemifield multiplication on \mathbb{F}_{q^n} if and only if for any $a \in \mathbb{F}_{q^n}^*$, $\text{Tr}_{q^n/q}(M(a)/a) \neq -1$, where $M(X) := \xi \sum_{i=0}^{n-1} b_i X^{q^i} \in \mathbb{F}_{p^n}[X]$.*

Proof. (\Rightarrow) Let $x * y$ be a presemifield multiplication. Assume to the contrary that there is $a \in \mathbb{F}_{q^n}^*$ such that

$$\text{Tr}_{q^n/q}(M(a)/a) = -1.$$

We consider the equation $x * a = 0$. It has a solution x if and only if there exists $u \in \mathbb{F}_q$ such that

$$(2.1) \quad xa = \xi u \quad \text{and}$$

$$(2.2) \quad B(x, a) = -u.$$

Plugging (2.1) into (2.2), we have $B(\xi u/a, a) = -u$, which means that

$$u \text{Tr}_{q^n/q} \left(\xi \sum_{i=0}^{n-1} b_i a^{q^i-1} \right) = -u,$$

i.e.

$$u \text{Tr}_{q^n/q}(M(a)/a) = -u,$$

which holds for any $u \in \mathbb{F}_q$ according to our assumption. Therefore, $x * a = 0$ has a nonzero solution. It contradicts our assumption that $*$ defines a presemifield multiplication.

(\Leftarrow) It is easy to see that the left and right distributivity of the multiplication $*$ hold. We only need to show that for any $a \neq 0$, $x * a = 0$ if and only if $x = 0$. This is achieved by reversing the first part of the proof. \square

Let $x * y$ be the multiplication defined in Theorem 2.1. Then it is straightforward to verify that the presemifield $(\mathbb{F}_{q^n}, +, *)$ is isotopic to $(\mathbb{F}_{q^n}, +, \star)$, where

$$x \star y := xy + B'(x, y)$$

and $B'(x, y) = \text{Tr}_{q^n/q}(\xi \sum_{i=0}^{n-1} b_i xy^{q^i})$. Therefore, we can restrict ourselves to the switchings of finite field multiplications with $\xi = 1$.

For the switchings

$$x \star y + B(x, y)\xi$$

of a (pre)semifield multiplication \star , it is difficult to obtain explicit conditions on $B(x, y)$. The reason is that generally we can not explicitly write down the solution of $x \star a = \xi u$ as we did for (2.1).

Let α be an element in \mathbb{F}_{q^n} such that $\text{Tr}_{q^n/q}(\alpha) = 1$. To find $M(X)$ satisfying the condition in Theorem 2.1, we only need to consider the q -linearized polynomial $L(X) := M(X) + \alpha X \in \mathbb{F}_{q^n}[X]$ such that

$$(2.3) \quad \text{Tr}_{q^n/q}(L(x)/x) \neq 0 \quad \text{for all } x \in \mathbb{F}_{q^n}^*.$$

Obviously, when $L(X) = \beta X$, where $\text{Tr}_{q^n/q}(\beta) \neq 0$, we have $\text{Tr}_{q^n/q}(L(x)/x) \neq 0$ for every nonzero x . The question is whether there are other L 's. We will give several results concerning this question throughout Sections 3 – 6.

The proof of next proposition is also straightforward.

Proposition 2.2. *Let $L(X) = \sum_{i=0}^{n-1} a_i X^{q^i} \in \mathbb{F}_{q^n}[X]$. If $\text{Tr}_{q^n/q}(L(x)/x) \neq 0$ for all $x \in \mathbb{F}_{q^n}^*$, then the mapping $x \mapsto L(x)$ is a permutation of \mathbb{F}_{q^n} .*

We include several lemmas which will be used later to investigate the commutativity of presemifield multiplications.

Lemma 2.3. *Let $x * y := xy + B(x, y)$, where $B(x, y) := \text{Tr}_{q^n/q}(\sum_{i=0}^{n-1} b_i xy^{q^i})$, $b_i \in \mathbb{F}_{q^n}$. Then $*$ is commutative if and only if $b_i \in \mathbb{F}_{q^{\gcd(i, n)}}$ for every $i = 0, 1, \dots, n-1$.*

Proof. Clearly, $x * y = y * x$ if and only if $B(x, y) = B(y, x)$, i.e.

$$\text{Tr}_{q^n/q} \left(\sum_{i=0}^{n-1} b_i xy^{q^i} \right) = \text{Tr}_{q^n/q} \left(\sum_{i=0}^{n-1} b_i yx^{q^i} \right),$$

which means that

$$\text{Tr}_{q^n/q} \left(x \sum_{i=0}^{n-1} (b_i - b_i^{q^i}) y^{q^i} \right) = 0$$

for every $x, y \in \mathbb{F}_{q^n}$. Therefore $*$ is commutative if and only if $b_i = b_i^{q^i}$ for every i . \square

It is possible that a non-commutative presemifield \mathbb{P} is isotopic to a commutative presemifield. We can use the next criterion given by Bierbrauer [2], as a generalization of Ganley's criterion [8], to test whether this happens.

Lemma 2.4. *A presemifield $(\mathbb{P}, +, *)$ is isotopic to a commutative semifield if and only if there is some nonzero v such that $A(v * x) * y = A(v * y) * x$, where $A : \mathbb{F}_{q^n} \rightarrow \mathbb{F}_{q^n}$ is defined by $A(x) * 1 = x$.*

Given an arbitrary presemifield multiplication, it is not easy to get the explicit expression for $A(x)$. However, we can do it for the switchings of multiplications of finite fields.

Lemma 2.5. *Let $x * y := xy + B(x, y)$ be a switching of \mathbb{F}_{q^n} , where $B(x, y) := \text{Tr}_{q^n/q}(\sum_{i=0}^{n-1} b_i xy^{q^i})$, $b_i \in \mathbb{F}_{q^n}$. Let $A : \mathbb{F}_{q^n} \rightarrow \mathbb{F}_{q^n}$ be such that $A(x) * 1 = x$ for every $x \in \mathbb{F}_{q^n}$. Then*

$$(2.4) \quad A(x) = x + \text{Tr}_{q^n/q} \left(\frac{-tx}{1 + \text{Tr}_{q^n/q}(t)} \right),$$

where $t = \sum_{i=0}^{n-1} b_i$.

Proof. First, we have

$$\begin{aligned} u * 1 &= u + B(u, 1) \\ &= u + \text{Tr}_{q^n/q} \left(\sum_{i=0}^{n-1} b_i u \right) \\ &= u + \text{Tr}_{q^n/q}(tu). \end{aligned}$$

It is worth noting that $1 * 1 = 1 + \text{Tr}_{q^n/q}(t) \neq 0$. Let $s := -t/(1 + \text{Tr}_{q^n/q}(t))$. Replacing u by the expression in (2.4), we have

$$\begin{aligned} A(x) * 1 &= x + \text{Tr}_{q^n/q}(sx) + \text{Tr}_{q^n/q}[tx + t\text{Tr}_{q^n/q}(sx)] \\ &= x + \text{Tr}_{q^n/q}[s(1 + \text{Tr}_{q^n/q}(t))x + tx] \\ &= x. \end{aligned}$$

□

3. SWITCHINGS OF \mathbb{F}_{q^n} FOR SMALL n

In this section, we investigate the switchings of finite fields $(\mathbb{F}_{q^n}, +, \cdot)$ where $n \leq 4$.

Lemma 3.1. *Let $L(X) = a_1X^q + a_0X \in \mathbb{F}_{q^2}[X]$. Then the polynomial*

$$f(X) = \text{Tr}_{q^2/q}(L(X)/X)$$

has no root in $\mathbb{F}_{q^2}^$ if and only if the equation $x^{q-1} = y$ has no solution $x \in \mathbb{F}_{q^2}^*$ for every $y \in \mathbb{F}_{q^2}$ satisfying*

$$(3.1) \quad a_1y^2 + \text{Tr}_{q^2/q}(a_0)y + a_1^q = 0.$$

Proof. Let $y := x^{q-1}$, where $x \in \mathbb{F}_{q^2}^*$. Then

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Tr}_{q^2/q}(L(x)/x) &= \text{Tr}_{q^2/q}(a_1x^{q-1} + a_0) \\ &= \text{Tr}_{q^2/q}(a_1y + a_0) \\ &= a_1^qy^q + a_1y + \text{Tr}_{q^2/q}(a_0) \\ &= y^q(a_1y^2 + \text{Tr}_{q^2/q}(a_0)y + a_1^q) \end{aligned}$$

since $y^{q+1} = 1$. Therefore, f has a nonzero root if and only if there exists a $(q-1)$ -th power in $\mathbb{F}_{q^2}^*$ satisfying (3.1). □

Theorem 3.2. *Let $L(X) = a_1X^q + a_0X \in \mathbb{F}_{q^2}[X]$. Then*

$$(3.2) \quad f(X) = \text{Tr}_{q^2/q}(L(X)/X)$$

has no root in $\mathbb{F}_{q^2}^$ if and only if $g(X) = X^2 + \text{Tr}_{q^2/q}(a_0)X + a_1^{q+1} \in \mathbb{F}_q[X]$ has two distinct roots in \mathbb{F}_q .*

Proof. If $a_1 = 0$, then $f(X) = \text{Tr}_{q^2/q}(a_0)$ and $g(X) = X^2 + \text{Tr}_{q^2/q}(a_0)X$. It is clear that f has no nonzero roots if and only if g has two distinct roots.

In the rest of the proof, we assume that $a_1 \neq 0$.

(\Leftarrow) Let $a_1y \in \mathbb{F}_q$ ($y \in \mathbb{F}_{q^2}$) be a root of g . By Lemma 3.1, it suffices to show that $y^{q+1} \neq 1$.

Case 1. Assume that q is even. Since g has two distinct roots, we have $\text{Tr}_{q^2/q}(a_0) \neq 0$. Since

$$(a_1y)^{q+1} = (a_1y)^2 = \text{Tr}_{q^2/q}(a_0)a_1y + a_1^{q+1},$$

we have

$$y^{q+1} = 1 + \frac{\text{Tr}_{q^2/q}(a_0)y}{a_1^q} \neq 1.$$

Case 2. Assume that q is odd. We have $y = \frac{1}{2a_1}(-\text{Tr}_{q^2/q}(a_0) + d)$, where $d \in \mathbb{F}_q^*$ and $d^2 = \text{Tr}_{q^2/q}(a_0)^2 - 4a_1^{q+1}$. Suppose to the contrary that $y^{q+1} = 1$. It follows that

$$(-\text{Tr}_{q^2/q}(a_0) + d)^{q+1} = 4a_1^{q+1},$$

which means

$$\mathrm{Tr}_{q^2/q}(a_0)^2 + d^2 - 2d\mathrm{Tr}_{q^2/q}(a_0) = 4a_1^{q+1}.$$

Hence

$$2d^2 - 2d\mathrm{Tr}_{q^2/q}(a_0) = 0.$$

Therefore $d = \mathrm{Tr}_{q^2/q}(a_0)$. But then $d^2 = \mathrm{Tr}_{q^2/q}(a_0)^2 \neq \mathrm{Tr}_{q^2/q}(a_0)^2 - 4a_1^{q+1}$, which is a contradiction.

(\Rightarrow) We first show that g is reducible in $\mathbb{F}_q[x]$. Otherwise, let $a_1y \in \mathbb{F}_{q^2} \setminus \mathbb{F}_q$ be a root of g . Then $(a_1y)^{q+1} = a_1^{q+1}$, thus $y^{q+1} = 1$. By Lemma 3.1, f has nonzero roots.

It remains to show that $\mathrm{Tr}_{q^2/q}(a_0)^2 - 4a_1^{q+1} \neq 0$. Assume to the contrary that $\mathrm{Tr}_{q^2/q}(a_0)^2 - 4a_1^{q+1} = 0$.

Case 1. Assume that q is even. It follows that $\mathrm{Tr}_{q^2/q}(a_0) = 0$. Write $a_1 = x^2$, where $x \in \mathbb{F}_{q^2}$, and let $y = x^{q-1}$. Then a_1y is a root of g , which leads to a contradiction.

Case 2. Assume that q is odd. Then $a_1y = -\mathrm{Tr}_{q^2/q}(a_0)/2$ is a root of g , and

$$y^{q+1} = \frac{\mathrm{Tr}_{q^2/q}(a_0)^2}{4a_1^{q+1}} = 1,$$

which is impossible by Lemma 3.1. \square

Remark. When $n = 2$, if there is some $L(X)$ such that (3.2) has no root in $\mathbb{F}_{q^2}^*$, then we can define a presemifield multiplication $*$ over \mathbb{F}_{q^2} via Theorem 2.1. Let $\mathbb{S} = (\mathbb{F}_{q^2}, +, \star)$ be a semifield which is isotopic to $(\mathbb{F}_{q^2}, +, *)$. We may assume that \star is defined by (1.1) and hence \mathbb{S} has identity 1. There are $a_{ij} \in \mathbb{F}_{q^2}$ such that $x * y = \sum_{i,j} a_{ij} x^{q^i} y^{q^j}$ for all $x, y \in \mathbb{F}_{q^2}$. Thus there are $b_{ij} \in \mathbb{F}_{q^2}$ such that $x \star y = \sum_{i,j} b_{ij} x^{q^i} y^{q^j}$ for all $x, y \in \mathbb{F}_{q^2}$. It follows that the center of \mathbb{S} contains \mathbb{F}_q . (For $x \in \mathbb{F}_q$ and $y \in \mathbb{F}_{q^2}$, we have $x \star y = x(1 \star y) = xy$ and $y \star x = x(y \star 1) = xy$. This implies that \mathbb{F}_q is contained in both the commutative center and the nucleus of \mathbb{S} .) Due to the classification of two-dimensional finite semifields by Dickson [7], \mathbb{S} is isotopic to a finite field.

Theorem 3.3. *Let q be a power of odd prime and let $L(X) = a_1X^{q^2} + a_0X \in \mathbb{F}_{q^4}[X]$ with $a_1 \neq 0$. Then $\mathrm{Tr}_{q^4/q}(L(X)/X)$ has no root in $\mathbb{F}_{q^4}^*$ if and only if $a_1^{q^2+1}$ is a square in \mathbb{F}_q^* and $\mathrm{Tr}_{q^4/q}(a_0) = 0$.*

Proof. Let $b = \mathrm{Tr}_{q^4/q}(a_0)$. Let $x \in \mathbb{F}_{q^4}^*$ and set $y := x^{q^2-1}$ and $z := a_1y + a_1^{q^2}/y$. Then

$$\begin{aligned} \mathrm{Tr}_{q^4/q}(L(x)/x) &= \mathrm{Tr}_{q^4/q}(a_1x^{q^2-1} + a_0) \\ &= a_1y + a_1^q y^q + a_1^{q^2}/y + a_1^{q^3}/y^q + \mathrm{Tr}_{q^4/q}(a_0) \\ &= z + z^q + b. \\ (3.3) \quad &= \left(z + \frac{b}{2}\right)^q + \left(z + \frac{b}{2}\right). \end{aligned}$$

Thus $\mathrm{Tr}_{q^4/q}(L(x)/x) = 0$ if and only if $(z + \frac{b}{2})^{q-1} = -1$ or 0, i.e., $z = t - \frac{b}{2}$ for some $t \in T := \{t \in \mathbb{F}_{q^4} : t^q = -t\} \subset \mathbb{F}_{q^2}$. Since $z = a_1y + a_1^{q^2}/y$, we see that $z = t - \frac{b}{2}$ if

and only if

$$(3.4) \quad a_1 y^2 + \left(\frac{b}{2} - t\right) y + a_1^{q^2} = 0.$$

By the proof of Theorem 3.2, we see that $\{x \in \mathbb{F}_{q^4}^* : y = x^{q^2-1} \text{ satisfies (3.4)}\} \neq \emptyset$ if and only if

$$g(X) := X^2 + \left(\frac{b}{2} - t\right) X + a_1^{q^2+1}$$

has two distinct roots in \mathbb{F}_{q^2} . Therefore, to sum up, $\text{Tr}_{q^4/q}(L(x)/x)$ has no root in $\mathbb{F}_{q^4}^*$ if and only if $g(X)$ has two distinct roots in \mathbb{F}_{q^2} for every $t \in T$. We now proceed to prove the “if” and the “only if” portions of the theorem separately.

(\Leftarrow) Assume $b = 0$ and $a_1^{q^2+1}$ is a square in \mathbb{F}_q^* . Then $a_1^{q^2+1} \neq t^2$ for all $t \in T$. Hence

$$\Delta := \left(\frac{b}{2} - t\right)^2 - 4a_1^{q^2+1} = t^2 - 4a_1^{q^2+1} \in \mathbb{F}_q^*.$$

It follows that g has two distinct roots in \mathbb{F}_{q^2} .

(\Rightarrow) Assume that $\text{Tr}_{q^4/q}(L(X)/X)$ has no root in $\mathbb{F}_{q^4}^*$. We want to show

R1. $b = 0$, and

R2. $a_1^{q^2+1}$ is a square in \mathbb{F}_q^* . Equivalently, $a_1^{q^2+1}$ is in \mathbb{F}_q and there is no $t \in T$ such that $t^2 = 4a_1^{q^2+1}$.

Now we assume that $\Delta = \left(\frac{b}{2} - t\right)^2 - 4a_1^{q^2+1} \neq 0$ always has a square root in \mathbb{F}_{q^2} , for every $t \in T$. Choose an element ξ of $\mathbb{F}_{q^2} \setminus \mathbb{F}_q$, such that $\xi^{q-1} = -1$. Then every element of \mathbb{F}_{q^2} can be written as $z + w\xi$, where $z, w \in \mathbb{F}_q$, and $T = \{x\xi : x \in \mathbb{F}_q\}$. We write $a_1^{q^2+1} = A_1 + A_2\xi$. As Δ is always a square in $\mathbb{F}_{q^2}^*$, the equation

$$(3.5) \quad (z + w\xi)^2 = (x\xi - b/2)^2 - (A_1 + A_2\xi)$$

in (z, w) has solutions for every $x \in \mathbb{F}_q$. Expanding (3.5), we have

$$(3.6) \quad z^2 + w^2\alpha = x^2\alpha + b^2/4 - A_1,$$

$$(3.7) \quad 2wz = -xb - A_2,$$

where $\alpha = \xi^2 \in \mathbb{F}_q$.

If we can show that $b = 0$ and $A_2 = 0$, then the proof is complete (**R2** can be easily derived from the condition that $\Delta \neq 0$). Suppose to the contrary that at least one of b and A_2 is not 0. Then there exists at most one $x = x_0 \in \mathbb{F}_q$ such that $w = 0$ by (3.7). Now assume that $w \neq 0$. From (3.7) we have

$$z = -\frac{xb + A_2}{2w}.$$

Plugging it into (3.6), we get

$$\frac{(xb + A_2)^2}{4w^2} + w^2\alpha = x^2\alpha + \frac{b^2}{4} - A_1,$$

i.e.,

$$\alpha(w^2)^2 - (x^2\alpha + \frac{b^2}{4} - A_1)w^2 + \frac{(xb + A_2)^2}{4} = 0.$$

For every given $x \in \mathbb{F}_q \setminus \{x_0\}$, this equation always has a solution w in \mathbb{F}_q . It follows that

$$f(x) = (x^2\alpha + \frac{b^2}{4} - A_1)^2 - \alpha(xb + A_2)^2$$

is always a square in \mathbb{F}_q . Let ψ be the multiplicative character of \mathbb{F}_q of order 2, and for convenience we set $\psi(0) = 0$. Then we have

$$(3.8) \quad \sum_{c \in \mathbb{F}_q} \psi(f(c)) \geq q - 6.$$

On the other hand, by Theorem 5.41 in [19] (it is routine to verify all the conditions for $f(x)$, because $(b, A_2) \neq (0, 0)$ and $(A_1, A_2) \neq (0, 0)$), we have

$$\sum_{c \in \mathbb{F}_q} \psi(f(c)) \leq 3\sqrt{q}.$$

Therefore $q - 6 \leq 3\sqrt{q}$, which means that $q = 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 17, 19$. We can use MAGMA [3] to show that $f(x)$ is not always a square for $x \in \mathbb{F}_q \setminus \{x_0\}$ when $q \leq 19$. Hence $b = A_2 = 0$, which completes the proof. \square

Theorem 3.4. *Let q be a power of an odd prime. Let $a_1 \in \mathbb{F}_{q^4}^*$ such that $a_1^{q^2+1}$ is a square in \mathbb{F}_q^* and let \tilde{a}_0 be an element in \mathbb{F}_{q^4} such that $\text{Tr}_{q^4/q}(\tilde{a}_0) = -1$. Define*

$$x * y = xy + \text{Tr}_{q^4/q}(a_1xy^{q^2} + \tilde{a}_0xy).$$

*According to Theorem 2.1 and Theorem 3.3, $(\mathbb{F}_{q^4}, +, *)$ forms a presemifield. Furthermore, it is isotopic to a commutative semifield.*

Proof. According to Lemma 2.4, we only have to show that there exists some v such that

$$A(v * x) * y = A(v * y) * x$$

for every $x, y \in \mathbb{F}_{q^4}$, where A is given by (2.4).

Using the same notation as in Lemma 2.5, we set $t = a_1 + \tilde{a}_0$ and $s = -t/(1 + \text{Tr}_{q^4/q}(t))$. Now,

$$\begin{aligned} A(v * x) &= A(vx + \text{Tr}_{q^4/q}(a_1vx^{q^2} + \tilde{a}_0vx)) \\ &= vx + \text{Tr}_{q^4/q}(a_1vx^{q^2} + \tilde{a}_0vx) + \text{Tr}_{q^4/q}[s(vx + \text{Tr}_{q^4/q}(a_1vx^{q^2} + \tilde{a}_0vx))] \\ &= vx + (1 + \text{Tr}_{q^4/q}(s))\text{Tr}_{q^4/q}(a_1vx^{q^2} + \tilde{a}_0vx) + \text{Tr}_{q^4/q}(svx) \\ &= vx + \frac{\text{Tr}_{q^4/q}(a_1vx^{q^2} + \tilde{a}_0vx)}{1 + \text{Tr}_{q^4/q}(a_1 + \tilde{a}_0)} - \frac{\text{Tr}_{q^4/q}((a_1 + \tilde{a}_0)vx)}{1 + \text{Tr}_{q^4/q}(a_1 + \tilde{a}_0)} \\ &= vx + \frac{\text{Tr}_{q^4/q}(a_1vx^{q^2} - a_1vx)}{1 + \text{Tr}_{q^4/q}(a_1 + \tilde{a}_0)}. \end{aligned}$$

For convenience, let $r(x)$ denote $A(v * x) - vx$. Then

$$\begin{aligned} A(v * x) * y &= vxy + r(x)y + \text{Tr}_{q^4/q}(a_1vxy^{q^2} + \tilde{a}_0vxy) + r(x)\text{Tr}_{q^4/q}(a_1y^{q^2} + \tilde{a}_0y) \\ &= vxy + \frac{\text{Tr}_{q^4/q}(a_1vx^{q^2} - a_1vx)}{1 + \text{Tr}_{q^4/q}(a_1 + \tilde{a}_0)}(y + \text{Tr}_{q^4/q}(a_1y^{q^2} + \tilde{a}_0y)) \\ &\quad + \text{Tr}_{q^4/q}(a_1vxy^{q^2} + \tilde{a}_0vxy). \end{aligned}$$

It is not difficult to see that if v is an element in \mathbb{F}_{q^4} such that $a_1 v \in \mathbb{F}_{q^2}$, then $A(v * x) * y = A(v * y) * x$, from which it follows that $(\mathbb{F}_{q^4}, +, *)$ is isotopic to a commutative semifield. \square

Theorem 3.5. *Let q be a power of an odd prime. Let $a_1 \in \mathbb{F}_{q^4}^*$ such that $a_1^{q^2+1}$ is a square in \mathbb{F}_q^* and let \tilde{a}_0 be an element in \mathbb{F}_{q^4} such that $\text{Tr}_{q^4/q}(\tilde{a}_0) = -1$. Let $x * y$ be defined as in Theorem 3.4, i.e.,*

$$x * y = xy + \text{Tr}_{q^4/q}(a_1 x y^{q^2} + \tilde{a}_0 xy).$$

*Then the presemifield $(\mathbb{F}_{q^4}, +, *)$ is isotopic to Dickson's semifield.*

Proof. We have already shown in Theorem 3.4 that $(\mathbb{F}_{q^4}, +, *)$ is isotopic to a commutative semifield, which is denoted by \mathbb{S} . Next we are going to prove that its middle nucleus $N_m(\mathbb{S})$ is of size q^2 and its left nucleus $N_l(\mathbb{S})$ is of size q . Furthermore, as \mathbb{S} is commutative, we have $N_r(\mathbb{S}) = N_l(\mathbb{S})$. Due to the classification of semifields planes of order q^4 with kernel \mathbb{F}_{q^2} and center \mathbb{F}_q by Cardinali, Polverino and Trombetti in [4], $(\mathbb{F}_{q^4}, +, *)$ is isotopic to Dickson's semifield.

To determine the middle and left nuclei of \mathbb{S} , we need to introduce another presemifield multiplication $x \circ y$, which corresponds to the *dual spread* of the spread defined by $x * y$. (For more details on the dual spread, see [16].) Actually, $x \circ y$ is defined as

$$(3.9) \quad x \circ y := xy + (a_1 y^{q^2} + \tilde{a}_0 y) \text{Tr}_{q^4/q}(x).$$

It is straightforward to verify that $\text{Tr}_{q^4/q}(x(z \circ y) - z(x * y)) = 0$. Let \mathbb{S}' denote a semifield which is isotopic to the presemifield defined by $x \circ y$. According to the interchanging of nuclei of semifields in the so called *Knuth orbit* ([16] and [18, Section 1.4]), we have $N_l(\mathbb{S}') \cong N_m(\mathbb{S})$ and $N_m(\mathbb{S}') \cong N_l(\mathbb{S})$.

To determine $N_l(\mathbb{S}')$ and $N_m(\mathbb{S}')$, we use the connection between certain homology groups as described in [13, Theorem 8.2] and [14, Result 12.4]. To be precise, we want to find every q -linearized polynomial $A(X)$ over \mathbb{F}_{q^4} such that for every $y \in \mathbb{F}_{q^4}$, there is a $y' \in \mathbb{F}_{q^4}$ satisfying $A(x) \circ y = x \circ y'$ for every $x \in \mathbb{F}_{q^4}$. The set $\mathcal{M}(\mathbb{S}')$ of all such $A(X)$ is equivalent to the middle nucleus $N_m(\mathbb{S}')$.

First, it is routine to verify that $A(X) = uX$ with $u \in \mathbb{F}_q$ is in $\mathcal{M}(\mathbb{S}')$. Next we show that there are no other $A(X)$ in $\mathcal{M}(\mathbb{S}')$.

Assume that

$$(3.10) \quad A(x)y + \text{Tr}_{q^4/q}(A(x))(a_1 y^{q^2} + \tilde{a}_0 y) = xy' + \text{Tr}_{q^4/q}(x)(a_1 y'^{q^2} + \tilde{a}_0 y')$$

holds for every $x \in \mathbb{F}_{q^4}$.

Let $x_0 \in \mathbb{F}_{q^4}^*$ be such that $\text{Tr}_{q^4/q}(x_0) = \text{Tr}_{q^4/q}(A(x_0)) = 0$. Then

$$A(x_0)y = x_0 y'.$$

It means that $y' = uy$ holds for each $y \in \mathbb{F}_{q^4}$, where $u = A(x_0)/x_0$. Plugging it into (3.10), we have

$$A(x)y + \text{Tr}_{q^4/q}(A(x))(a_1 y^{q^2} + \tilde{a}_0 y) = uxy + \text{Tr}_{q^4/q}(x)(a_1 (uy)^{q^2} + \tilde{a}_0 uy).$$

From this equation we can deduce that

$$(3.11) \quad A(x) - ux + (\text{Tr}_{q^4/q}(A(x)) - \text{Tr}_{q^4/q}(x)u)\tilde{a}_0 = 0,$$

$$(3.12) \quad (\text{Tr}_{q^4/q}(A(x)) - \text{Tr}_{q^4/q}(x)u^{q^2})a_1 = 0.$$

Since $a_1 \neq 0$, from (3.12) we see that

$$(3.13) \quad \text{Tr}_{q^4/q}(A(x)) = u^{q^2} \text{Tr}_{q^4/q}(x)$$

for every $x \in \mathbb{F}_{q^4}$. From (3.13) it follows that $u \in \mathbb{F}_q$. Therefore, by (3.11), we have $A(x) = ux$ where $u \in \mathbb{F}_q$. Hence $|N_l(\mathbb{S})| = |N_m(\mathbb{S}')| = q$.

Next we determine every q -linearized polynomial $A(X)$ over \mathbb{F}_{q^4} such that for every $y \in \mathbb{F}_{q^4}$, there is a $y' \in \mathbb{F}_{q^4}$ satisfying $A(x \circ y) = x \circ y'$ for every $x \in \mathbb{F}_{q^4}$. The set of all such $A(X)$ is equivalent to the left nucleus $N_l(\mathbb{S}')$.

Assume that

$$(3.14) \quad A(xy + \text{Tr}_{q^4/q}(x)(a_1 y^{q^2} + \tilde{a}_0 y)) = xy' + \text{Tr}_{q^4/q}(x)(a_1 y'^{q^2} + \tilde{a}_0 y').$$

It is readily verified that when $A(X) = cX$ for some $c \in \mathbb{F}_{q^2}$, (3.14) holds for all x and y in \mathbb{F}_{q^4} with $y' = cy$. Hence \mathbb{F}_{q^2} is a subfield contained in $N_l(\mathbb{S}')$. On the other hand, $N_l(\mathbb{S}')$ has to be a proper subfield of \mathbb{F}_{q^4} , for otherwise \mathbb{S}' would be a finite field, which would lead to a contradiction. Therefore, we have $|N_m(\mathbb{S})| = |N_l(\mathbb{S}')| = q^2$, which completes the proof. \square

Theorem 3.6. *Let q be a power of prime and let u, v be elements in $\mathbb{F}_{q^3}^*$ such that $N_{q^3/q}(-v/u) \neq 1$. For every $\beta \in \mathcal{B}$, where*

$$\mathcal{B} := \{x \in \mathbb{F}_{q^3} : \text{Tr}_{q^3/q}(u^{q^2} v^q x) = u^{q^2+q+1} + v^{q^2+q+1}\},$$

the equation

$$(3.15) \quad ux^{q^2-1} + vx^{q-1} + \beta = 0$$

has no solution in $\mathbb{F}_{q^3}^$. Let $L(X) := u^{q^2} v^q (ua^{q^2-1} X^{q^2} + va^{q-1} X^q + \theta X)$, where $\theta \in \mathcal{B}$ and $a \in \mathbb{F}_{q^3}^*$. Then the polynomial $\text{Tr}_{q^3/q}(L(X)/X)$ has no root in $\mathbb{F}_{q^3}^*$.*

Proof. When $\beta = 0$, (3.15) becomes $x^{q-1}(ux^{q(q-1)} + v) = 0$. If there exists $x \in \mathbb{F}_{q^3}^*$ such that $ux^{q(q-1)} + v = 0$, then $N_{q^3/q}(-v/u) = N_{q^3/q}(x^{q(q-1)}) = 1$, which leads to a contradiction.

Now suppose $\beta \neq 0$. Assume to the contrary that (3.15) has a solution $x \in \mathbb{F}_{q^3}^*$. Let $y := x^{q-1}$. Then we have $uy^{q+1} + vy + \beta = 0$. It follows that

$$(3.16) \quad y^q = \frac{-vy - \beta}{uy},$$

and

$$y^{q^2} = \frac{v^q(vy + \beta) - \beta^q uy}{-u^q(vy + \beta)}.$$

Hence

$$y^{q^2} y^q y = \frac{v^q(vy + \beta) - \beta^q uy}{u^{q+1}},$$

which is equal to 1 since $y = x^{q-1}$. Therefore,

$$(3.17) \quad (v^{q+1} - \beta^q u)y + v^q \beta = u^{q+1}.$$

Suppose that $u\beta^q = v^{q+1}$. Then $u^{q^2} v^q \beta = v^{q^2+1} v^q$, and $\text{Tr}_{q^3/q}(u^{q^2} v^q \beta) = 3v^{q^2+q+1}$.

On the other hand, we also have $u^{q+1} = v^q \beta$ from (3.17). It follows that $\text{Tr}_{q^3/q}(u^{q^2} v^q \beta) = 3u^{q^2+q+1}$. All together with $\beta \in \mathcal{B}$, we have that

$$u^{q^2+q+1} + v^{q^2+q+1} = 3v^{q^2+q+1} = 3u^{q^2+q+1},$$

which can not holds for $3 \nmid q$. Moreover, if $3 \mid q$, then $u^{q^2+q+1} = -v^{q^2+q+1}$ which contradicts the assumption that $N_{q^3/q}(-v/u) \neq 1$. Hence $u\beta^q \neq v^{q+1}$.

Since $u\beta^q \neq v^{q+1}$, from (3.17) we obtain

$$(3.18) \quad y = \frac{u^{q+1} - v^q \beta}{v^{q+1} - \beta^q u}$$

Plugging (3.18) into (3.16), we have

$$\frac{u^{q^2+q} - v^{q^2} \beta^q}{v^{q^2+q} - \beta^q u^q} = \frac{vu^q - \beta^{q+1}}{v^q \beta - u^{q+1}}.$$

Hence

$$\begin{aligned} & u^{q^2+q} v^q \beta - u^{q^2+2q+1} + u^{q+1} v^{q^2} \beta^q - v^{q^2+q} \beta^{q+1} \\ &= v^{q^2+q+1} u^q - \beta^{q^2} v u^{2q} - v^{q^2+q} \beta^{q+1} + \beta^{q^2+q+1} u^q. \end{aligned}$$

Dividing it by u^q , we have

$$\beta^{q^2+q+1} - (u^q v \beta^{q^2} + u v^{q^2} \beta^q + u^{q^2} v^q \beta) + u^{q^2+q+1} + v^{q^2+q+1} = 0.$$

It follows from $\text{Tr}_{q^3/q}(u^{q^2} v^q \beta) = u^{q^2+q+1} + v^{q^2+q+1}$ that

$$\beta^{q^2+q+1} = 0.$$

Hence $\beta = 0$, which is a contradiction. Therefore, (3.15) has no solution in $\mathbb{F}_{q^3}^*$.

Furthermore, if $\text{Tr}_{q^3/q}(L(X)/X)$ has a root $x_0 \in \mathbb{F}_{q^3}^*$, then $u^{q^2} v^q (u(ax_0)^{q^2-1} + v(ax_0)^{q-1} + \theta) = \gamma$ for some $\gamma \in \mathbb{F}_{q^3}$ satisfying $\text{Tr}_{q^3/q}(\gamma) = 0$. We write γ as $\gamma = u^{q^2} v^q \tau$ for some $\tau \in \mathbb{F}_{q^3}$. Then $\theta - \tau \in \mathcal{B}$ and

$$u(ax_0)^{q^2-1} + v(ax_0)^{q-1} + \theta - \tau = 0,$$

which contradicts the fact that (3.15) has no solution in $\mathbb{F}_{q^3}^*$. \square

For given u and v , it is not difficult to see that for different a , we obtain isotopic semifields via Theorem 3.6: Let the multiplication corresponding to $a = 1$ be $xy + B(x, y)$. Then for other $a \in \mathbb{F}_{q^3}^*$, the semifield multiplication is $\frac{axy + B(x, ay)}{a}$. Furthermore, when $u, v \in \mathbb{F}_q$ and $a = 1$, it follows from Lemma 2.3 that the presemifield \mathbb{P} derived from $L(x)$ in Theorem 3.6 is commutative. It is worth noting that, up to isotopism, we can obtain non-commutative semifields via Theorem 3.6. For instance, let $q = 4$ and let ξ be a primitive element of \mathbb{F}_{q^3} which is a root of $X^6 + X^4 + X^3 + X + 1$. Setting $u = \xi^5$, $v = \xi$ and $\beta = \xi^{62}$, we can use computer to show that the presemifield \mathbb{P} derived from Theorem 3.6 is not isotopic to a commutative one.

According to the classification of semifields of order q^3 with center containing \mathbb{F}_q in [21], the presemifield obtained via Theorem 3.6 is either finite field or generalized twisted field.

Besides all the L 's described in this section, we did not find any other examples. Thus we propose the following question:

Question 3.7. For $n > 4$, is there a q -linearized polynomial $L(X) = \sum_{i=0}^{n-1} a_i X^{q^i} \in \mathbb{F}_{q^n}[X]$ with $(a_1, \dots, a_{n-1}) \neq (0, \dots, 0)$ satisfying (2.3)?

4. SWITCHINGS OF \mathbb{F}_{p^n} FOR LARGE n

The main result of this section is a negative answer to Question 3.7 when $q = p$ (prime) and n is large.

Theorem 4.1. *Let $q = p$, where p is a prime, and assume $n \geq \frac{1}{2}(p-1)(p^2-p+4)$. If $L(X) = \sum_{i=0}^{n-1} a_i X^{p^i} \in \mathbb{F}_{p^n}[X]$ satisfies (2.3), i.e.,*

$$\mathrm{Tr}_{p^n/p}(L(x)/x) \neq 0 \quad \text{for all } x \in \mathbb{F}_{p^n}^*,$$

then $a_1 = \dots = a_{n-1} = 0$.

In 1971, Payne [22] considered a similar problem which calls for the determination of all 2-linearized polynomials $L = \sum_{i=0}^{n-1} a_i X^{2^i} \in \mathbb{F}_{2^n}[X]$ such that both $L(X)$ and $L(X)/X$ are permutation polynomials of \mathbb{F}_{2^n} . Such linearized polynomials give rise to translation ovoids in the projective plane $\mathrm{PG}(2, \mathbb{F}_{2^n})$ [23]. Payne later solved the problem by showing that such linearized polynomials can have only one term [23]. For a different proof of Payne's theorem, see [11, §8.5]. For the q -ary version of Payne's theorem, see [12].

4.1. Preliminaries. Let $L(X) = \sum_{i=0}^{n-1} a_i X^{q^i} \in \mathbb{F}_{q^n}[X]$. For $x \in \mathbb{F}_{q^n}^*$, we have

$$\mathrm{Tr}_{q^n/q}\left(\frac{L(x)}{x}\right) = \mathrm{Tr}_{q^n/q}\left(\sum_{i=0}^{n-1} a_i x^{q^i-1}\right) = \sum_{0 \leq i, j \leq n-1} a_i^{q^j} x^{q^j(q^i-1)}.$$

Therefore (2.3) is equivalent to

$$(4.1) \quad \left[\sum_{0 \leq i, j \leq n-1} a_i^{q^j} X^{q^j(q^i-1)} \right]^{q-1} \equiv \mathrm{Tr}_{q^n/q}(a_0)^{q-1} + \left[1 - \mathrm{Tr}_{q^n/q}(a_0)^{q-1}\right] X^{q^n-1} \pmod{X^{q^n} - X}.$$

Let $\Omega = \{0, 1, \dots, q^n - 1\}$ and $\Omega_0 = \{0, 1, \dots, \frac{q^n-1}{q-1}\}$. For $\alpha, \beta \in \Omega_0$, define $\alpha \oplus \beta \in \Omega_0$ such that $\alpha \oplus \beta \equiv \alpha + \beta \pmod{\frac{q^n-1}{q-1}}$ and

$$\alpha \oplus \beta = \begin{cases} 0 & \text{if } \alpha = \beta = 0, \\ \frac{q^n-1}{q-1} & \text{if } \alpha + \beta \equiv 0 \pmod{\frac{q^n-1}{q-1}} \text{ and } (\alpha, \beta) \neq (0, 0). \end{cases}$$

For $d_0, \dots, d_{n-1} \in \mathbb{Z}$, we write

$$(d_0, \dots, d_{n-1})_q = \sum_{i=0}^{n-1} d_i q^i.$$

When q is clear from the context, we write $(d_0, \dots, d_{n-1})_q = (d_0, \dots, d_{n-1})$. For $j, i \in \mathbb{Z}$, $i \geq 0$, let

$$s(j, i) = (0 \dots 0 \underbrace{1 \dots 1}_i 0 \dots 0^{n-1})_q,$$

where the positions of the digits are labeled modulo n and the string of 1's may wrap around. For example, with $n = 4$,

$$s(1, 3) = (0 \ 1 \ 1 \ 1), \quad s(3, 2) = (1 \ 0 \ 0 \ 1).$$

Note that

$$s(j, i) \equiv q^j \frac{q^i - 1}{q - 1} \pmod{q^n - 1}.$$

For each $\alpha \in \Omega_0$, let $C(\alpha)$ denote the coefficient of $X^{\alpha(q-1)}$ in the left side of (4.1) after reduction modulo $X^{q^n} - X$. Then we have

$$(4.2) \quad C(\alpha) = \sum_{\substack{0 \leq j_1, i_1, \dots, j_{q-1}, i_{q-1} \leq n-1 \\ s(j_1, i_1) \oplus \dots \oplus s(j_{q-1}, i_{q-1}) = \alpha}} a_{i_1}^{q^{j_1}} \cdots a_{i_{q-1}}^{q^{j_{q-1}}}.$$

Let

$$S = \{s(j, i) : 0 \leq j \leq n-1, 1 \leq i \leq n-1\}.$$

If $C(\alpha) = 0$, we can derive from (4.2) useful information about a_i 's if we know the possible ways to express α as an \oplus sum of $q-1$ elements (not necessarily distinct) of $S \cup \{0\}$.

Let $\alpha = (d_0, \dots, d_{n-1})_q \in \Omega$, where $0 \leq d_i \leq q-1$. If $d_i > d_{i-1}$ ($d_i < d_{i-1}$), where the subscripts are taken modulo n , we say that i is an *ascending* (*descending*) position of α with multiplicity $|d_i - d_{i-1}|$. The multiset of ascending (descending) positions of α is denoted by $\text{Asc}(\alpha)$ ($\text{Des}(\alpha)$). The multiset cardinality $|\text{Asc}(\alpha)|$ ($= |\text{Des}(\alpha)|$) is denoted by $\text{asc}(\alpha)$ ($= \text{des}(\alpha)$). For example, if $\alpha = (2 \ 0 \ 1 \ 1 \ 3 \ 0)$, then

$$\text{Asc}(\alpha) = \{0, 0, 2, 4, 4\}, \quad \text{Des}(\alpha) = \{1, 1, 5, 5, 5\}, \quad \text{asc}(\alpha) = 5.$$

Assume that $\alpha \in \Omega$ has $\text{asc}(\alpha) = q-1$. Then α cannot be a sum of less than $q-1$ elements (not necessarily distinct) of S . Moreover, if

$$\alpha = s(j_1, i_1) + \cdots + s(j_{q-1}, i_{q-1}),$$

where $0 \leq j_1, \dots, j_{q-1} \leq n-1$ and $1 \leq i_1, \dots, i_{q-1} \leq n-1$, we must have $\{j_1, \dots, j_{q-1}\} = \text{Asc}(\alpha)$ and $\{j_1 + i_1, \dots, j_{q-1} + i_{q-1}\} = \text{Des}(\alpha)$, where $j_k + i_k$ is taken modulo n .

4.2. Proof of Theorem 4.1.

Lemma 4.2. *Let $q = p$, where p is a prime, and assume $L = \sum_{i=0}^{n-1} a_i X^{p^i} \in \mathbb{F}_{p^n}[X]$ satisfies (2.3). Then for all $1 \leq i_1 < \cdots < i_{p-1}$ and $0 \leq t_{p-2} \leq \cdots \leq t_1$ with $i_{p-1} + t_1 \leq n-2$, we have*

$$(4.3) \quad \sum_{\tau} a_{i_{p-1} + \tau(p-1)} a_{i_{p-2} + \tau(p-2)}^{p^{i_{p-1} - i_{p-2}}} \cdots a_{i_1 + \tau(1)}^{p^{i_{p-1} - i_1}} = 0,$$

where $(\tau(1), \dots, \tau(p-1))$ runs through all permutations of $(t_1, \dots, t_{p-2}, 0)$.

Proof. Let

$$\alpha = (\overbrace{1 \cdots 1}^{i_{p-1} - i_{p-2}} \cdots \overbrace{p-2 \cdots p-2}^{i_2 - i_1} \overbrace{p-1 \cdots p-1}^{i_1} \underbrace{p-2 \cdots p-2}_{t_{p-2}} \underbrace{p-3 \cdots p-3}_{t_{p-3} - t_{p-2}} \cdots \underbrace{1 \cdots 1}_{t_1 - t_2} \underbrace{0 \cdots 0}_{\substack{n - i_{p-1} - t_1 \\ \geq 2}}) \in \Omega_0.$$

For $1 \leq k \leq p-2$, we have

$$\begin{aligned} & \alpha + (k \cdots k) \\ &= (\overbrace{k+1 \cdots k+1 \cdots p-1 \cdots p-1}^{i_{p-1}} 0 \underbrace{1 \cdots 1}_{t_1} \cdots \underbrace{e}_{\substack{\geq 1}} \overbrace{k \cdots k}^{n - i_{p-1} - t_1}), \end{aligned}$$

where $e = k+1$ or k , depending on whether it receives a carry from the preceding digit. If $e = k+1$, then $\text{asc}(\alpha + (k \cdots k)) \geq p-1 - k + k+1 = p$. If $e = k$, then

$t_1 > 0$ and $d \geq k + 1$, which also implies that $\text{asc}(\alpha + (k \cdots k)) \geq p$. Therefore $\alpha + (k \cdots k)$ is not a sum of $\leq p - 1$ elements (not necessarily distinct) of S , i.e., not a sum of $p - 1$ elements (not necessarily distinct) of $S \cup \{0\}$.

On the other hand, we have $\text{asc}(\alpha) = p - 1$ and

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Asc}(\alpha) &= \{0, i_{p-1} - i_{p-2}, \dots, i_{p-1} - i_1\}, \\ \text{Des}(\alpha) &= \{i_{p-1}, i_{p-1} + t_{p-2}, \dots, i_{p-1} + t_1\}.\end{aligned}$$

Therefore, the only possible ways to express α as a sum of $p - 1$ elements (not necessarily distinct) of $S \cup \{0\}$ are

$\alpha = s(0, i_{p-1} + \tau(p-1)) + s(i_{p-1} - i_{p-2}, i_{p-2} + \tau(p-2)) + \cdots + s(i_{p-1} - i_1, i_1 + \tau(1))$, where $(\tau(1), \dots, \tau(p-1))$ is a permutation of $(t_1, \dots, t_{p-2}, 0)$. Together with the fact that for $1 \leq k \leq p - 2$, $\alpha + (k \cdots k)$ is not a sum of $p - 1$ elements (not necessarily distinct) of $S \cup \{0\}$, we have proved that

$$\alpha = \alpha_1 \oplus \cdots \oplus \alpha_{p-1}, \quad \alpha_i \in S \cup \{0\},$$

if and only if

$$\begin{aligned}&\{\alpha_1, \dots, \alpha_{p-1}\} \\ &= \{s(0, i_{p-1} + \tau(p-1)), s(i_{p-1} - i_{p-2}, i_{p-2} + \tau(p-2)), \dots, s(i_{p-1} - i_1, i_1 + \tau(1))\},\end{aligned}$$

where $(\tau(1), \dots, \tau(p-1))$ is a permutation of $(t_1, \dots, t_{p-2}, 0)$.

Now we have

$$\begin{aligned}(4.4) \quad 0 &= C(\alpha) && \text{(by (4.1))} \\ &= (p-1)! \sum_{\tau} a_{i_{p-1} + \tau(p-1)} a_{i_{p-2} + \tau(p-2)}^{p^{i_{p-1} - i_{p-2}}} \cdots a_{i_1 + \tau(1)}^{p^{i_{p-1} - i_1}} && \text{(by (4.2))},\end{aligned}$$

which gives (4.3). \square

Proof of Theorem 4.1. 1° We first show that for all $1 \leq k \leq p - 1$ and

$$1 + \sum_{j=0}^{k-1} j \leq i_k < \cdots < i_{p-1} \leq n - k - 1,$$

we have

$$a_{i_k} \cdots a_{i_{p-1}} = 0.$$

We use induction on k . When $k = 1$, the conclusion follows from Lemma 4.2 with $t_{p-2} = \cdots = t_1 = 0$. Assume $2 \leq k \leq p - 1$. In Lemma 4.2, let $t_1 = k - 1$, $t_2 = k - 2$, \dots , $t_{k-1} = 1$, $t_k = \cdots = t_{p-2} = 0$, $i_{k-1} = i_k - 1$, $i_{k-2} = i_k - 2$, \dots , $i_1 = i_k - (k - 1)$, and note that $i_{p-1} + t_1 = i_{p-1} + k - 1 \leq n - 2$. We have

$$(4.5) \quad \sum_{\tau} a_{i_{p-1} + \tau(p-1)}^* \cdots a_{i_1 + \tau(1)}^* = 0,$$

where $(\tau(1), \dots, \tau(p-1))$ runs through all permutations of $(k-1, k-2, \dots, 1, 0, \dots, 0)$ and the $*$'s are suitable powers of p . (In general, we use a $*$ to denote a positive integer exponent whose exact value is not important.) Multiplying (4.5) by $a_{i_k} \cdots a_{i_{p-1}}$ gives

$$(4.6) \quad a_{i_k}^* \cdots a_{i_{p-1}}^* + \sum_{(\tau(1), \dots, \tau(k-1)) \neq (k-1, \dots, 1)} a_{i_k} \cdots a_{i_{p-1}} a_{i_{p-1} + \tau(p-1)}^* \cdots a_{i_1 + \tau(1)}^* = 0.$$

When $(\tau(1), \dots, \tau(k-1)) \neq (k-1, \dots, 1)$, at least one of $i_1 + \tau(1), \dots, i_{p-1} + \tau(p-1)$, say i'_{k-1} , is less than i_k . Also note that $i'_{k-1} \geq i_1 = i_k - (k-1) \geq 1 + 1 + 2 + \dots + (k-2)$. Therefore by the induction hypothesis, $a_{i'_{k-1}} a_{i_k} \dots a_{i_{p-1}} = 0$. Thus the \sum in (4.6) equals 0, which gives $a_{i_k} \dots a_{i_{p-1}} = 0$.

2° Let $k = p-1$ in 1°. We have

$$a_i = 0 \quad \text{for all } 1 + \frac{1}{2}(p-2)(p-1) \leq i \leq n-p.$$

3° We claim that

$$a_i = 0 \quad \text{for all } 1 \leq i \leq \frac{1}{2}(p-2)(p-1).$$

Assume to the contrary that this is not true. Let $1 \leq l \leq \frac{1}{2}(p-2)(p-1)$ be the largest integer such that $a_l \neq 0$. Let

$$\alpha = (\underbrace{1 \dots 1}_{l} \underbrace{0 \dots 0}_{p+1} \underbrace{1 \dots 1}_{l} \underbrace{0 \dots 0}_{p+1} \dots \underbrace{1 \dots 1}_{l} \underbrace{0 \dots 0}_{p+1} 0 \dots 0) \in \Omega_0.$$

$p-1$ copies

(Here we used the assumption that $n \geq (p-1)[\frac{1}{2}(p-2)(p-1) + p+1]$.) For $0 \leq k \leq p-2$, we have $\text{asc}(\alpha + (k \dots k)) = p-1$ and

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Asc}(\alpha + (k \dots k)) &= \{0, l+p+1, 2(l+p+1), \dots, (p-2)(l+p+1)\}, \\ \text{Des}(\alpha + (k \dots k)) &= \{l, l+p+1+l, 2(l+p+1)+l, \dots, (p-2)(l+p+1)+l\}. \end{aligned}$$

If $\alpha + (k \dots k)$ is expressed as a sum of $p-1$ elements (not necessarily distinct) of S , the expression must be of the form

$$(4.7) \quad \alpha + (k \dots k) = s(0, i_1) + s(l+p+1, i_2) + \dots + s((p-2)(l+p+1), i_{p-1}),$$

where $i_1, \dots, i_{p-1} \in \{1, \dots, n-1\}$, and in modulus n

$$(4.8) \quad \begin{aligned} &\{i_1, l+p+1+i_2, \dots, (p-2)(l+p+1)+i_{p-1}\} \\ &= \{l, l+p+1+l, 2(l+p+1)+l, \dots, (p-2)(l+p+1)+l\}. \end{aligned}$$

We further require $a_{i_1} \dots a_{i_{p-1}} \neq 0$, which implies that $i_1, \dots, i_{p-1} \in \{1, \dots, l\} \cup \{n-p+1, \dots, n-1\}$. It follows from (4.8) that $i_1 = \dots = i_{p-1} = l$. Thus we have

$$(4.9) \quad \begin{aligned} 0 &= C(\alpha) && \text{(by (4.1))} \\ &= (p-1)! a_l^{p^0} a_l^{p^{l+p+1}} \dots a_l^{p^{(p-2)(l+p+1)}} && \text{(by (4.2) and (4.7)),} \end{aligned}$$

which is a contradiction.

4° Finally, we show that

$$a_i = 0 \quad \text{for all } n-p+1 \leq i \leq n-1.$$

Assume to the contrary that this is not true. Let $n-l \in \{n-p+1, \dots, n-1\}$ be the smallest integer such that $a_{n-l} \neq 0$. Let

$$\alpha = (1 \dots 1 \underbrace{0 \dots 0}_{l} \underbrace{1 \dots 0}_{l} \underbrace{0 \dots 0}_{l} 1 \underbrace{0 \dots 0}_{l} 1) \in \Omega_0.$$

$p-1$ copies

For $0 \leq k \leq p-2$, we have $\text{asc}(\alpha + (k \cdots k)) = p-1$ and

$$\text{Asc}(\alpha + (k \cdots k)) = \{n-1, n-1-(l+1), \dots, n-1-(p-2)(l+1)\},$$

$$\text{Des}(\alpha + (k \cdots k)) = \{n-1-l, n-1-l-(l+1), \dots, n-1-l-(p-2)(l+1)\}.$$

If $\alpha + (k \cdots k)$ is expressed as a sum of $p-1$ elements (not necessarily distinct) of S , the expression must be of the form

$$(4.10) \quad \begin{aligned} & \alpha + (k \cdots k) \\ &= s(n-1, i_1) + s(n-1-(l+1), i_2) + \cdots + s(n-1-(p-2)(l+1), i_{p-1}), \end{aligned}$$

where $i_1, \dots, i_{p-1} \in \{1, \dots, n-1\}$, and in modulus n

$$(4.11) \quad \begin{aligned} & \{n-1+i_1, n-1-(l+1)+i_2, \dots, n-1-(p-2)(l+1)+i_{p-1}\} \\ &= \{n-1-l, n-1-l-(l+1), \dots, n-1-l-(p-2)(l+1)\}. \end{aligned}$$

We further require $a_{i_1} \cdots a_{i_{p-1}} \neq 0$, which implies that $i_1, \dots, i_{p-1} \in \{n-l, \dots, n-1\}$. Under this restriction, it is easy to see that (4.11) forces $i_1 = \cdots = i_{p-1} = n-l$. Thus we have

$$(4.12) \quad \begin{aligned} 0 &= C(\alpha) && \text{(by (4.1))} \\ &= (p-1)! a_{n-l}^{p^{n-1}} a_{n-l}^{p^{n-1}-(l+1)} \cdots a_{n-l}^{p^{n-1}-(p-2)(l+1)} && \text{(by (4.2) and (4.10)),} \end{aligned}$$

which is a contradiction. \square

It appears that the assumption that $n \geq \frac{1}{2}(p-1)(p^2-p+4)$ in Theorem 4.1 may be weakened. On the other hand, when q is not a prime, the proofs of Lemma 4.2 and Theorem 4.1 fail for the following reason: In (4.4), (4.9) and (4.12), $(p-1)!$ is replaced by $(q-1)!$, which is 0 in \mathbb{F}_q . When $q = p^e$, (4.1) becomes

$$\begin{aligned} \left[\prod_{k=0}^{e-1} \sum_{0 \leq i, j \leq n-1} a_1^{p^k q^j} X^{p^k q^j (q^i - 1)} \right]^{p-1} &\equiv \text{Tr}_{q^n/q}(a_0)^{q-1} + [1 - \text{Tr}_{q^n/q}(a_0)^{q-1}] X^{q^n-1} \\ &\pmod{X^{q^n} - X}. \end{aligned}$$

The question is how to decipher this equation.

5. A CONNECTION TO SOME CYCLIC CODES FOR GENERAL \mathbb{F}_q

In this section we prove certain necessary conditions for a q -linearized polynomials $L(X) \in \mathbb{F}_{q^n}[X]$ to satisfy $\text{Tr}_{q^n/q}(L(x)/x) \neq 0$ for all $x \in \mathbb{F}_{q^n}^*$, where q is a prime power. In particular, we give a natural connection to some cyclic codes. There is also a connection of such cyclic codes to some algebraic curves. In the next section, we will use this connection to algebraic curves to get some necessary conditions for such q -linearized polynomials $L(X) \in \mathbb{F}_{q^n}[X]$.

If $L(X) = a_0 X \in \mathbb{F}_{q^n}[X]$, then $\text{Tr}_{q^n/q}(L(x)/x) \neq 0$ for all $x \in \mathbb{F}_{q^n}^*$ if and only if $\text{Tr}_{q^n/q}(a_0) \neq 0$. Hence we assume that $L(X) = a_0 X + a_1 X^q + \cdots + a_{n-1} X^{q^{n-1}} \in \mathbb{F}_{q^n}[X]$ with $(a_1, a_2, \dots, a_{n-1}) \neq (0, 0, \dots, 0)$.

First we recall some notation and basic facts from coding theory (see, for example, [20]). Let $N = q^n - 1$. A code of length N over \mathbb{F}_q is just a nonempty subset of \mathbb{F}_q^N . It is called a *linear* code if it is a vector space over \mathbb{F}_q . The set C^\perp of all N -tuples in \mathbb{F}_q^N orthogonal to all codewords of a linear code C with respect to the

usual inner product on \mathbb{F}_q^N is called the *dual code* of C . The Hamming weight of an arbitrary N -tuple $\mathbf{u} = (u_0, u_1, \dots, u_{N-1}) \in \mathbb{F}_q^N$ is

$$\|\mathbf{u}\| = |\{0 \leq i \leq N-1 : u_i \neq 0\}|.$$

A *cyclic* code of length N over \mathbb{F}_q is an ideal C of the quotient ring $R = \mathbb{F}_q[X]/\langle X^N - 1 \rangle$. Here a codeword $(c_0, c_1, \dots, c_{N-1}) \in \mathbb{F}_q^N$ of C corresponds to an element $c_0 + c_1X + \dots + c_{N-1}X^{N-1} + \langle X^N - 1 \rangle \in C$. All ideals of R are principal. The monic polynomial $g(X)$ of the least degree such that $C = \langle g(X) \rangle / \langle X^N - 1 \rangle$ is called the *generator* polynomial of C . The dual C^\perp is cyclic with generator polynomial $X^{\deg h} h(X^{-1})/h(0)$, where $h(X) = (X^N - 1)/g(X)$.

If $\theta \in \mathbb{F}_{q^n}$ is a root of $g(X)$, then so is θ^q . A set $B \subset \mathbb{F}_{q^n}$ is called a *basic zero set* of C if both of the following conditions are satisfied:

- $\{\theta^{q^i} : \theta \in B, 0 \leq i \leq n-1\}$ is the set of the roots of $g(X)$.
- If $\theta_1, \theta_2 \in B$ with $\theta_1^{q^i} = \theta_2$ for some integer i , then $\theta_1 = \theta_2$.

The following proposition gives a natural connection to some cyclic codes. Some arguments in its proof will also be used in the next section.

Proposition 5.1. *Let γ be a primitive element of $\mathbb{F}_{q^n}^*$. Let C be the cyclic code of length $N = q^n - 1$ over \mathbb{F}_q whose dual code C^\perp has*

$$\{1, \gamma^{q-1}, \gamma^{q^2-1}, \dots, \gamma^{q^{n-1}-1}\}$$

as a basic zero set. We have the following: There exists a q -linearized polynomial $L(X) = a_0X + a_1X^q + \dots + a_{n-1}X^{q^{n-1}} \in \mathbb{F}_{q^n}[X]$ with $(a_1, a_2, \dots, a_{n-1}) \neq (0, 0, \dots, 0)$ such that $\text{Tr}_{q^n/q}(L(x)/x) \neq 0$ for all $x \in \mathbb{F}_{q^n}^$ if and only if the cyclic code C has a codeword $(c_0, c_1, \dots, c_{N-1})$ of Hamming weight N such that $(c_0, c_1, \dots, c_{N-1}) \neq u(1, 1, \dots, 1)$ for any $u \in \mathbb{F}_q^*$. Moreover the dimension of C over \mathbb{F}_q is $n^2 - n + 1$.*

Proof. We first show that $\{1, \gamma^{q-1}, \gamma^{q^2-1}, \dots, \gamma^{q^{n-1}-1}\}$ is a basic zero set. This means that the exponents $0, q-1, q^2-1, \dots, q^{n-1}-1$ are in distinct q -cyclotomic cosets modulo $q^n - 1$. For $0 \leq d < q^n - 1$, let $\psi(d)$ be the base q digits of d , i.e., $\psi(d) = (d_0, d_1, \dots, d_{n-1})$, where $0 \leq d_i \leq q-1$ are integers such that $d = \sum_{i=0}^{n-1} d_i q^i$. Let $\overline{0}, \overline{q-1}, \overline{q^2-1}, \dots, \overline{q^{n-1}-1}$ denote the q -cyclotomic cosets of $0, q-1, q^2-1, \dots, q^{n-1}-1$ modulo $q^n - 1$. Their images under ψ are

$$\psi(\overline{0}) = \{(0, 0, \dots, 0)\},$$

$$\psi(\overline{q-1}) = \{(q-1, 0, 0, \dots, 0), (0, q-1, 0, \dots, 0), \dots, (0, 0, \dots, 0, q-1)\},$$

$$\psi(\overline{q^2-1}) = \{(q-1, q-1, 0, \dots, 0), (0, q-1, q-1, \dots, 0), \dots, (q-1, 0, \dots, 0, q-1)\},$$

$$\vdots$$

$$\psi(\overline{q^{n-1}-1}) = \{(q-1, \dots, q-1, 0), (0, q-1, \dots, q-1), \dots, (q-1, \dots, q-1, 0)\}.$$

Note that the elements in each row are obtained via cyclic shifts of the first element of the row. This proves that $0, q-1, q^2-1, \dots, q^{n-1}-1$ are in distinct q -cyclotomic cosets modulo $q^n - 1$. Moreover the cardinality of the union of their q -cyclotomic cosets modulo $q^n - 1$ is

$$1 + (n-1)n = n^2 - n + 1.$$

Therefore the dimensions of C is $n^2 - n + 1$. Finally using Delsarte's Theorem [26, Theorem 9.1.2] we obtain that the codewords of C in \mathbb{F}_q^N are

$$C = \left\{ \left(\text{Tr}_{q^n/q}(a_0 + a_1x^{q-1} + \dots + a_{n-1}x^{q^{n-1}-1}) \right)_{x \in \mathbb{F}_{q^n}^*} : a_0, a_1, \dots, a_{n-1} \in \mathbb{F}_{q^n} \right\}.$$

Note that $\text{Tr}_{q^n/q}(L(x)/x) = u$ for all $x \in \mathbb{F}_{q^n}^*$ if and only if $\text{Tr}_{q^n/q}(L(X)/X) \equiv u \pmod{X^{q^n} - X}$, from which it follows that $(a_1, a_2, \dots, a_{n-1}) = (0, 0, \dots, 0)$. This completes the proof. \square

6. SOME CONDITIONS VIA THE HASSE-WEIL-SERRE BOUND FOR GENERAL \mathbb{F}_q

In this section we obtain some necessary conditions for the q -linearized polynomials $L(X) \in \mathbb{F}_{q^n}[X]$ such that $\text{Tr}_{q^n/q}(L(x)/x) \neq 0$ for all $x \in \mathbb{F}_{q^n}^*$.

The Hasse-Weil-Serre bound for algebraic curves over finite fields implies upper and lower bounds on the Hamming weights of codewords of cyclic codes (see [10, 28]). Using this method we obtain Theorem 6.1.

First we introduce further notations. Let $\text{Res} : \mathbb{Z} \rightarrow \{0, 1, \dots, q^n - 2\}$ be the map such that $\text{Res}(j) \equiv j \pmod{q^n - 1}$. Put $q = p^m$ with $m \geq 1$, where p is the characteristic of \mathbb{F}_q . Let $\text{Lead} : \{0, 1, \dots, p^{mn} - 2\} \rightarrow \{0, 1, \dots, p^{mn} - 2\}$ be the map sending j to the smallest integer k in $\{0, 1, \dots, p^{mn} - 2\}$ such that $k \equiv jp^u \pmod{p^{mn} - 1}$ for some integer $u \geq 0$. In other words, $\text{Lead}(j)$ is the smallest nonnegative integer in the p -cyclotomic coset of j modulo $p^{mn} - 1$. It is important to note that if $0 < j < p^{mn} - 1$, then $\text{Lead}(j)$ is a nonnegative integer which is coprime to p .

Theorem 6.1. *Let $L(X) = a_0X + a_1X^q + \dots + a_{n-1}X^{q^{n-1}} \in \mathbb{F}_{q^n}[X]$ be a q -linearized polynomial with $(a_1, \dots, a_{n-1}) \neq (0, \dots, 0)$. For each $1 \leq j \leq q^n - 2$ with $\gcd(j, q^n - 1) = 1$, let*

$$\ell(j) = \max\{\text{Lead}(\text{Res}(j(q^i - 1))) : 1 \leq i \leq n - 1 \text{ and } a_i \neq 0\}.$$

Moreover, let

$$(6.1) \quad \ell = \min_j \ell(j),$$

where the minimum is over all integers $1 \leq j \leq q^n - 2$ with $\gcd(j, q^n - 1) = 1$. Then we have the following:

- Case $\text{Tr}_{q^n/q}(a_0) \neq 0$: If

$$(6.2) \quad q^n + 1 - \frac{(q-1)(\ell-1)}{2} \lfloor 2q^{n/2} \rfloor > 1,$$

then it is impossible that $\text{Tr}_{q^n/q}(L(x)/x) \neq 0$ for all $x \in \mathbb{F}_{q^n}^*$.

- Case $\text{Tr}_{q^n/q}(a_0) = 0$: If

$$(6.3) \quad q^n + 1 - \frac{(q-1)(\ell-1)}{2} \lfloor 2q^{n/2} \rfloor > q + 1,$$

then it is impossible that $\text{Tr}_{q^n/q}(L(x)/x) \neq 0$ for all $x \in \mathbb{F}_{q^n}^*$.

Proof. If γ is a primitive element of $\mathbb{F}_{q^n}^*$, then γ^j is also a primitive element of $\mathbb{F}_{q^n}^*$ for all $1 \leq j \leq q^n - 2$ with $\gcd(j, q^n - 1) = 1$. Note that

$$\text{Tr}_{q^n/q}(L(x)/x) = \text{Tr}_{q^n/q}(a_0 + a_1x^{q-1} + \dots + a_{n-1}x^{q^{n-1}-1}) \neq 0 \text{ for all } x \in \mathbb{F}_{q^n}^*,$$

if and only if

$$\mathrm{Tr}_{q^n/q}(L(x^j)/x^j) = \mathrm{Tr}_{q^n/q}(a_0 + a_1x^{j(q-1)} + \dots + a_{n-1}x^{j(q^{n-1}-1)}) \neq 0 \text{ for all } x \in \mathbb{F}_{q^n}^*.$$

Moreover, $x^{j(q^i-1)} = x^{\mathrm{Res}(j(q^i-1))}$ for $x \in \mathbb{F}_{q^n}^*$, $1 \leq i \leq n-1$ and $1 \leq j \leq q^n-2$.

Recall that ℓ is defined in (6.1). We choose and fix an integer $1 \leq j \leq q^n-2$ with $\gcd(j, q^n-1) = 1$ such that $\ell = \ell(j)$.

Let a_{t_1}, \dots, a_{t_s} be the nonzero coefficients among a_1, \dots, a_{n-1} . (Note that $s \geq 1$ since $(a_1, \dots, a_{n-1}) \neq (0, \dots, 0)$.) Since $0, q^{t_1}-1, \dots, q^{t_s}-1$ belong to different p -cyclotomic cosets modulo q^n-1 and $\gcd(j, q^n-1) = 1$, we have that $0, j(q^{t_1}-1), \dots, j(q^{t_s}-1)$ belong to different p -cyclotomic cosets modulo q^n-1 . Thus $\mathrm{Res}(j(q^{t_i}-1)) = j_i p^{u_i}$, where $u_i \geq 0$, $p \nmid j_i$, $1 \leq i \leq s$, and j_1, \dots, j_s are distinct. We may assume $0 < j_1 < j_2 < \dots < j_s = \ell$. We have

$$a_0 + a_1 X^{\mathrm{Res}(j(q-1))} + \dots + a_{n-1} X^{\mathrm{Res}(j(q^{n-1}-1))} = a_0 + b_1 X^{j_1 p^{u_1}} + \dots + b_s X^{j_s p^{u_s}},$$

where $b_i = a_{t_i}$, $1 \leq i \leq s$.

Let χ be the Artin-Schreier type algebraic curve over \mathbb{F}_{q^n} given by

$$\chi : Y^q - Y = a_0 + b_1 X^{j_1 p^{u_1}} + \dots + b_s X^{j_s p^{u_s}}.$$

Let $S \subset \mathbb{F}_{p^{mn}}^*$ be a complete set of coset representatives of \mathbb{F}_p^* in $\mathbb{F}_{p^{mn}}^*$. For $\mu \in S$, let χ_μ be the Artin-Schreier type algebraic curve over \mathbb{F}_{q^n} given by

$$\chi_\mu : Y^p - Y = \mu(a_0 + b_1 X^{j_1 p^{u_1}} + \dots + b_s X^{j_s p^{u_s}}).$$

Note that χ_μ is a degree p covering of the projective line. Using [9, Theorem 2.1] the genus $g(\chi)$ of χ is computed in terms of the genera of χ_μ as

$$(6.4) \quad g(\chi) = \sum_{\mu \in S} g(\chi_\mu).$$

Now we determine the genus $g(\chi_\mu)$ of χ_μ . We choose and fix $\mu \in S$. Let $c_1, c_2, \dots, c_s \in \mathbb{F}_{p^{mn}}^*$ be such that

$$c_1^{p^{u_1}} = \mu b_1, \quad c_2^{p^{u_2}} = \mu b_2, \quad \dots, \quad c_s^{p^{u_s}} = \mu b_s.$$

Let χ'_μ be the Artin-Schreier type algebraic curve over \mathbb{F}_{q^n} given by

$$\chi'_\mu : Y^p - Y = \mu a_0 + c_1 X^{j_1} + \dots + c_s X^{j_s}.$$

We observe that χ_μ and χ'_μ are birationally isomorphic and hence the genera $g(\chi_\mu)$ and $g(\chi'_\mu)$ are the same. Indeed, if $u_1 \geq 1$, then

$$\begin{aligned} Y^p - Y &= \mu a_0 + c_1^{p^{u_1}} X^{j_1 p^{u_1}} + c_2^{p^{u_2}} X^{j_2 p^{u_2}} + \dots + c_s^{p^{u_s}} X^{j_s p^{u_s}} \\ &= \mu a_0 + \left(c_1^{p^{u_1-1}} X^{j_1 p^{u_1-1}} \right)^p + c_2^{p^{u_2}} X^{j_2 p^{u_2}} + \dots + c_s^{p^{u_s}} X^{j_s p^{u_s}} \end{aligned}$$

and hence

$$\begin{aligned} &\left[Y - \left(c_1^{p^{u_1-1}} X^{j_1 p^{u_1-1}} \right) \right]^p - \left[Y - \left(c_1^{p^{u_1-1}} X^{j_1 p^{u_1-1}} \right) \right] \\ &= \mu a_0 + c_1^{p^{u_1-1}} X^{j_1 p^{u_1-1}} + c_2^{p^{u_2}} X^{j_2 p^{u_2}} + \dots + c_s^{p^{u_s}} X^{j_s p^{u_s}}. \end{aligned}$$

This gives a birational isomorphism between χ_μ and the curve given by

$$Y^p - Y = \mu a_0 + c_1^{p^{u_1-1}} X^{j_1 p^{u_1-1}} + c_2^{p^{u_2}} X^{j_2 p^{u_2}} + \dots + c_s^{p^{u_s}} X^{j_s p^{u_s}}.$$

By induction on u_1 we obtain a birational isomorphism between χ_μ and the curve given by

$$Y^p - Y = \mu a_0 + c_1 X^{j_1} + c_2^{p^{u_2}} X^{j_2 p^{u_2}} + \dots + c_s^{p^{u_s}} X^{j_s p^{u_s}}.$$

Applying the same method to the monomials $c_2^{p^{u_2}} X^{j_2 p^{u_2}}, \dots, c_s^{p^{u_s}} X^{j_s p^{u_s}}$ we conclude that the curves χ_μ and χ'_μ are birationally isomorphic.

Recall that the integers $0, j_1, \dots, j_s$ are in distinct p -cyclotomic cosets modulo $q^n - 1$. As $c_s \neq 0$ and $\gcd(j_s, p) = 1$ we obtain that χ'_μ is absolutely irreducible over \mathbb{F}_{q^n} . Moreover $s \geq 1$ and $j_s = \ell$. Hence by [26, Proposition 3.7.8] we have

$$g(\chi_\mu) = g(\chi'_\mu) = (p-1)(\ell-1)/2,$$

which is independent from the choice of $\mu \in S$. Using (6.4) for the genus $g(\chi)$ of χ we obtain that

$$g(\chi) = \sum_{\mu \in S} g(\chi_\mu) = |S|(p-1)(\ell-1)/2 = (q-1)(\ell-1)/2.$$

Assume that $\text{Tr}_{q^n/q}(L(x)/x) \neq 0$ for all $x \in \mathbb{F}_{q^n}^*$. The number $N(\chi)$ of \mathbb{F}_{q^n} -rational points of χ is

(6.5)

$$N(\chi) = 1 + q|\{x \in \mathbb{F}_{q^n} : \text{Tr}(L(x)/x) = 0\}| = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } \text{Tr}_{q^n/q}(a_0) \neq 0, \\ q+1 & \text{if } \text{Tr}_{q^n/q}(a_0) = 0. \end{cases}$$

The Hasse-Weil-Serre lower bound on $N(\chi)$ (see, for example, [26, Theorem 5.3.1]) implies that

$$(6.6) \quad N(\chi) \geq q^n + 1 - \frac{(q-1)(\ell-1)}{2} \lfloor 2q^{n/2} \rfloor.$$

Combining (6.2), (6.3), (6.5) and (6.6), we complete the proof. \square

The following corollary, which is a restatement of Theorem 6.1, shows that the distribution of the nonzero coefficients of a q -linearized polynomial L satisfying $\text{Tr}_{q^n/q}(L(x)/x) \neq 0$ for all $x \in \mathbb{F}_{q^n}^*$ is subject to certain restrictions.

Corollary 6.2. *Let $L(X) = a_0X + a_1X^q + \dots + a_{n-1}X^{q^{n-1}} \in \mathbb{F}_{q^n}[X]$ be a q -linearized polynomial with $(a_1, \dots, a_{n-1}) \neq (0, \dots, 0)$. Assume that $\text{Tr}_{q^n/q}(L(x)/x) \neq 0$ for all $x \in \mathbb{F}_{q^n}^*$. Then for each integer $1 \leq j \leq q^n - 2$ with $\gcd(j, q^n - 1) = 1$ we have the following:*

(i) *If $\text{Tr}_{q^n/q}(a_0) \neq 0$, there exists $1 \leq i \leq n-1$ such that $a_i \neq 0$ and*

$$\text{Lead}(\text{Res}(j(q^i - 1))) \geq 1 + \left\lceil \frac{2q^n}{(q-1)\lfloor 2q^{n/2} \rfloor} \right\rceil.$$

(ii) *If $\text{Tr}_{q^n/q}(a_0) = 0$, there exists $1 \leq i \leq n-1$ such that $a_i \neq 0$ and*

$$\text{Lead}(\text{Res}(j(q^i - 1))) \geq 1 + \left\lceil \frac{2(q^n - q)}{(q-1)\lfloor 2q^{n/2} \rfloor} \right\rceil.$$

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